

But clause 18 is the substitution of an old clause, and, about half-way down, appears the following:—

Any elector present shall, before receiving his ballot paper, answer such questions or produce such evidence as to his qualifications to vote. That places a deputy returning officer in the position of an inquisitor.

The SOLICITOR GENERAL. The object of these words is to meet cases that may arise.

Mr. BENNETT. There is no provision that this section shall not be applicable to other provinces. I submit that, in its present form, it will be applicable. Assume a man is entitled to vote, and there is no question of his name not being on the list. The deputy returning officer, favouring the powers that be, acts as an inquisitor, and asks the voter, whose name is on the list and whose name has been confirmed by the judge, certain questions, and then refuses to give the voter a ballot. Such a clause is placing in the hands of the deputy returning officer a power which he is liable to abuse. Not only has he the privilege, in his quasi-magisterial capacity, to rule that a voter shall not have a ballot, but where a man's name does not appear on the list, he can proffer to such man a ballot, and he will have the privilege of voting. If that section is to be applicable to all the provinces, I think we might as well dispense with the voters' lists altogether.

Mr. CLANCY. I have just been reading the first clause.

Some hon. MEMBERS. We are on the preamble.

Mr. DEPUTY SPEAKER. We are considering the first section. I have no objection, however, to an hon. member discussing the whole Bill.

Sir CHARLES TUPPER. We will probably make greater progress in that way. Explanations, such as the hon. Solicitor General may be able to give on other clauses, will lead, no doubt, to the adoption of the first clause.

The MINISTER OF TRADE AND COMMERCE (Sir Richard Cartwright). The hon. gentleman is a little mistaken as to the practical result. It is really absolutely necessary to take a Bill clause by clause, otherwise the discussion wanders in every possible direction.

Mr. BERGERON. I suppose the hon. gentleman remembers the session of 1885. At that time, the same explanations were gone over about five hundred times. The committee is at present considering the first clause, which states that this Bill shall be cited as the Franchise Act, 1898. We can discuss the whole Bill on that clause.

Mr. CLANCY. It seems pretty clear, that the first clause practically includes the

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whole Bill, and, therefore, gives pretty full range for discussion. I am very glad to hear the conversion of the Minister of Trade and Commerce. I hope changed circumstances may not have been the means of his conversion. I had not the privilege of sitting in this House when the present Act was under discussion, but I had the privilege of reading many excellent speeches delivered by that hon. gentleman, in which he did not lay down such a rule as he is laying down this evening. I will call attention to some points that have already been mentioned, and I do so with the object of calling the attention of the Solicitor General to the clause to which the hon. member for East Simcoe (Mr. Bennett) made reference, that is, regarding the very extraordinary powers placed in the hands of the deputy returning officer. Instead of placing a voter whose name may be properly on the list, at the disposal of the deputy returning officer, which is a very dangerous course to pursue, some mode should be provided by which he should not be subjected to any catechising or badgering, which may result in intimidating a voter, and the voter should then have the right to receive a ballot and vote. My hon. friend should not propose to place voters in a position in which they may be driven from the poll.

The MINISTER OF MARINE AND FISHERIES (Sir Louis Davies). I would suggest the inutility of a discussion such as has been entered upon. The Solicitor General has stated that if real objections to the working of any one of the clauses are presented, he is willing to receive suggestions with a view to remove the same. We are at present discussing the first section, which simply provides that the Bill shall be entitled the Franchise Act of 1898. The principle of the Bill having been admitted, we are now proceeding to discuss each clause separately. Let them be intelligently discussed, amendments suggested and accepted, if necessary. If the present course is pursued, it will prevent the Bill being passed. The leader of the Opposition expressed his willingness to use his influence in getting through the Bill to-night. No one can want to prevent hon. members addressing the House, but I rise to deprecate the introduction of a discussion on sections 23 and 24, when the committee is at present considering section 1, which has no relation whatever to either of those clauses.

Mr. WALLACE. I quite disagree with the view taken by the Minister of Marine and Fisheries. I consider it is impossible to lay down a hard and fast rule, and say that a member, in discussing the Bill, shall confine himself to one clause, which may cover, as in this case, only the title of the Bill. As hon. members know there is an easy way of getting rid of the objections by moving that the committee rise, and then any hon member can discuss the clauses of